1921

Exhibition of Modern Japanese Paintings by members of Nippon Bijutsu-in Tokyo Japan

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A71p
1921a

Given in Memory
OF
WALTER MUIR WHITEHILL
Museum of Fine Arts
Boston

EXHIBITION OF MODERN JAPANESE PAINTINGS BY MEMBERS OF NIPPON BIJUTSU-IN TOKYO JAPAN

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
BOSTON, MASS.

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FOREWORD

The Cleveland Museum of Art has organized this exhibition of modern Japanese painting, believing that it is wise at this time that the American public should have some further understanding of the recent developments in Japanese painting, and of the effort on the part of the Nippon Bijutsu-in to revive the old traditions and to hold all that is best in the art of the older Japan, while selecting such modern methods as may logically be added to the older methods. This exhibition is a showing of one of the most important phases of the painting of Japan, the skill of whose painters is an established tradition.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Museum of Fine Arts, of Boston, for the valuable help rendered by Mr. Kojiro Tomita, Assistant Curator of the Department of Chinese and Japanese Art, who assisted with the correspondence, and translated the introduction and catalogue from the Japanese.

FREDERIC ALLEN WHITING, Director,
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

April, 1921.

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THE NIPPON BIJUTSU-IN

The Nippon Bijutsu-in, or Fine Arts Academy of Japan, is an association of Japanese artists which aims at once to conserve and to develop the art ideals of Asia. From its foundation in 1898, it has been a vital force in the art activities of Japan, and has the distinction to-day of being the only independent organization of artists which can seriously rival the Imperial Art Academy. It is fitting at this time to review its notable career.

Toward the close of the last century the people of the hitherto isolated Empire of Japan found themselves eagerly imitating all that the West had to offer. In the field of art racial impulses were imperiled by an indiscriminate absorption of European modes of expression. Even the government authorities in the Department of Education, who had jurisdiction over the National School of Art in Tokyo, allowed themselves to drift with the popular current, and it soon became apparent that the policies of the School itself, which had been established for the purpose of rejuvenating and perpetuating the national art, were to be reshaped. The controversy which arose between these government officials and the late Okakura-Kakuzo, then Director of the School, terminated in the resignation of the latter, whereupon many members of the faculty who sympathized with his views also relinquished their positions. United under Mr. Okakura's leadership, this body of men at once took upon itself the task of establishing an institution which

should be dedicated to the furtherance of their common ideals. Within a few months after the break with the National School of Art, the Bijutsu-in was born, and its members were at work in the studios and classrooms of its new and specially erected buildings in Yanaka, Tokyo. Here, with Okakura-Kukuzo, the distinguished critic, as Chief Councilor, and Gahō Hashimoto, the most lamented of all modern artists of Japan, as Director, this group of pioneers turned to its self-appointed task. Unhampered by government interference and liberated from the bonds of mere tradition, they were free to revel in the resources of that dim past when art was not a profession but a passion. Inspiration was to be the motive power of their creations. Among the early activities of the Bijutsu-in may be mentioned, first, the training of the younger generation in the practice of art; second, the holding of biennial exhibitions in Tokyo and occasional traveling exhibitions in various provinces; and third, the publication of a monthly magazine called the *Nippon Bijutsu*.

Indeed, the insistent efforts of the Bijutsu-in in those early days were in the main responsible for the reawakening of the national consciousness in art. The nation as a whole, however, continued to be deeply immersed in Occidental materialism, while native art commanded the attention of relatively few. This attitude of indifference on the part of the public, coupled with the Russo-Japanese War, which came in 1904, retarded, temporarily at least, the progress of the association, and it was during this period of inactivity at home that several of its members traveled through India, Europe and the United States in company with Mr. Okakura. In 1906 the Bijutsu-in quarters in Yanaka were abandoned and in their stead studios were erected in Izura, Hidachi Province, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, where Taikwan Yokoyama, Shunso Hishida, Kwanzan Shimomura and

Bazan Kimura took up their residence near the estate of Mr. Okakura. In this little village of Izura, remote from all society save that of a few fishermen, these artists cultivated their cherished ideals; while Mr. Okakura, during occasional absences in Boston, was earnestly interpreting the art of the Far East. Even though situated at a distance from the metropolis, the Bijutsu-in members were nevertheless in close touch with the new movement in art which was stirring under the direction of the Minister of Education, and when the first National Exhibition of Modern Art was held under the government auspices, not only was Mr. Okakura on its Council and Jury, but Gaho, Taikwan and Kwanzan also served as jurors, while many of the Bijutsu-in members enthusiastically coöperated by contributing examples of their work. As time went on, however, it was felt by many that the annual government exhibitions were fast becoming breeders of a certain type of art, thereby discouraging self-expression. To such a tendency, minds like those which dominated the Bijutsu-in could not submit. The Bijutsu-in members accordingly revolted and once more, in 1914 unfurled their standard by opening in Tokyo an exhibition of their own. From that year the rivalry has continued and annually the Bijutsu-in has held an exhibition which has been thought often to surpass, in spirit at least, that of the government. A vigorous campaign on the part of the Bijutsu-in may be said to be responsible for the establishment of the Imperial Art Academy in 1919 for the purpose of supervising a new movement in connection with the National Exhibition.

Before the reopening of the Bijutsu-in in 1914, death had claimed a number of its charter members, among them Gaho (in 1908) and Shunso (in 1912). The untimely decease of Mr. Okakura in 1913 dealt such a severe blow that the disruption of the Bijutsu-in seemed imminent. But the unwillingness of the few surviving

original members to lose their identity in the art world which had its focus in the government exhibition, put new life into the association and prompted the rebuilding of the studios in Tokyo. Here in their new home these veteran pioneers, together with their newly elected associates, consecrating themselves anew to the realization of Mr. Okakura's vision, are again bending their energies to revitalizing the contemporary art movement in Japan. Of the artists associated with the Bijutsu-in, there are at present eighteen painters and nine sculptors. Sixteen of the former group are contributors to the present exhibition.

[Translated by Kojiro Tomita.]

CATALOGUE

SEISUI, HASHIMOTO

Born in 1877, he studied first under Gahō Hashimoto, later at the Nippon Bijutsu-in. He was elected an Associate of the latter body in 1916.

1 Blossoming Peony

2 Autumn Moon over the Hills

KEISEN, TOMITA

Born in 1879, he was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1915.

3 Running Deer

4 The Cherry of Gion at Night

SHŌKWAN, ŌCHI

Born in 1881, he graduated from the Tōkyō Art School in 1902. He was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1914.

5 A Farmhouse in the Autumn Twilight

6 Calm Sea at Evenfall

USEN, OGAWA

Born in 1868, he studied first at the Shōgidō the European manner of painting, beginning as early as 1881; in 1897 he took up the study of Japanese painting as well. He was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1917.

7 A *Kappa* and his Family

A *kappa* is a water-goblin with numerous kin; legend relates his mysterious acts, sometimes evil, sometimes good.

8 The Gleeful *Sudama*

The *sudama*, or wood-sprites, are said to become goblins capable of causing clouds and mists.

RYŪSHI, KAWABATA

Born in 1885, he was elected an associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1915.

9 A Prairie-Fire

10 Herons on a Frosty Morning

TAIKWAN, YOKOYAMA

Born in 1870, he graduated from the Tōkyō Art School in 1893 and was made Professor at the same school in 1897. From 1904 to 1906 he traveled in India, Europe and America; from 1909 to 1913 he was a member of the Jury of the National Exhibition of Art. He is a Charter Member, Trustee and Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in.

11 A Shintō Shrine

12 After the Rain

13 A Weasel

14 Early Morning

Mount Fuji above the sea of clouds.

GAKURYŌ, NAKAMURA

Born in 1890, he graduated from the Tōkyō Art School in 1912. He was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1915.

15 In the Spring Glow

A women of the aristocracy in the Keichō period (sixteenth to seventeenth century), playing cards under a blossoming cherry tree.

16 A Sparrow on a Branch

SŌFU, NAGANO

Born in 1885, he studied under Gyokudō Kawai. He was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1914.

17 Hideyoshi, the Great Regent

Hideyoshi, the Napoleonic genius of Japan, who was born in 1536 and died in 1598, is here shown at about sixty years of age.

18 A Blue Bird and a Blossoming Red Plum

KŌKWA, YAMAMURA

Born in 1885, he is a graduate of the Tōkyō Art School. He was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1916.

19 A Yellow Bird on a Blossoming Pear-Tree

20 A Dancing Girl of Kyōto

YUKIHIKO, YASUDA

Born in 1884, he is a Trustee and Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in.

21 Plum Blossoms at Dawn

SEISON, MAEDA

Born in 1883, he was elected an Associate in 1918.

22 Scenes in the Buddhist Hell

23 Catfish

TŌKWAN, FUDEYA

Born in 1876, he graduated from the Tōkyō Art School in 1900. He was elected as Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1916.

24 Autumn at Saga

The subject is based upon the incident of the retirement of the Lady Kogō of the twelfth century to the field of Saga where she played on the *koto* by the light of the moon.

25 Early Spring

KWANPŌ, ARAI

Born in 1878, he studied under Toshikata Mizuno. He was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1915; and in 1917 he traveled in India.

26 Myōonten, the Buddhist Goddess of Music

27 Dawn

The day is breaking over Buddhist edifices of the Nara period.

KŌFU, KITANO

Born in 1880, he was elected an Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in in 1916.

28 The *Samisen*

A woman of the early seventeenth century playing on a *samisen*.

29 Rouging

A dancing girl of Ōsaka painting her lips.

BUZAN, KIMURA

Born in 1877, he graduated from the Tōkyō Art School in 1896. From 1899 he has been a Member of the Nippon Bijutsu-in, of which he is both a Trustee and an Associate.

30 Monju, the Buddhist God of Wisdom

31 Tree-Peony under the Rain

32 A White Cat and a Wild Rose

KWANZAN, SHIMOMURA

Born in 1873, he graduated from the Tōkyō Art School in 1894; later he held the position of Professor of Art in the same school. He has traveled in Europe and America and is a Charter Member, Trustee and Associate of the Nippon Bijutsu-in.

33 A Beauty of the Kwansei Era

The Kwansei Era falls towards the end of the eighteenth century, during the administration of the peaceful Tokugawa period.

For Reference

Not to be taken from this room

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